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STATEMENT OF HERBERT F. DeSIMONE, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN SYSTEMS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, BEFORE THE SELECT SUB-COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR REGARDING AMENDMENTS TO THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT OF 1965, MARCH 22, 1972.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

It is indeed a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the proposed amendments to the Older Americans Act, particularly those which relate to the provision of more efficient, effective, and less costly transportation services for the elderly.

Mr. Chairman, Americans regard mobility as one of our basic rights. We live in an era of shopping centers, hospital complexes and recreational areas. Few of us today still live in small neighborhoods where doctors, grocery stores, churches and friends are all within walking distance of each other. The things we need for daily living are spread out and public transportation no longer ties together the people and the services they require.

Most people, obviously, compensate for this change in our way of life by owning an auto and driving from place to place. In many respects, I believe this discriminates against our elderly.

Let's face facts. Only 45 percent of our older Americans are licensed to drive automobiles; yet, many of these in fact do not because of finances, safety or health. As we all know, small communities often do not have bus service or even taxis in American today. Even when these are available, the fares can be staggering to our elderly who live on fixed incomes--so staggering that transportation has become their third largest expense. Only food and housing rank higher.

As a result, many older Americans lead lonesome lives and often neglect their health because they have no way to get to their friends or to their doctors when they are sick.

I believe we must create a society where the elderly must have the same opportunity as other persons to utilize public facilities and services and to participate fully in the life of the community.

This problem is particularly complex because the elderly are not an identifiable minority confined within specific geographic areas. The more than 20 million Americans over 65 years are interspersed, often unrecognized, throughout the general populace. They are as varied and selective in their individual wants and desires as any other segment of our population.

The Department of Transportation is conscious of the mobility problems of our older Americans. I am here today to pledge our continued commitment to develop ways to make public transportation systems serve the means and needs of the elderly.

Mr. Chairman, at this time I wish to provide the Committee a few examples of our current programs to improve transportation services for the elderly and the handicapped.

The Department is currently conducting a study of Metropolitan Washington's transportation system to determine its accessibility to the elderly and handicapped. The study, scheduled to be completed in June of this year, will produce a set of recommendations which we hope can be tested in METRO as it is being constructed.

In a Dial-A-Ride demonstration project just begun this month in Haddonfield, New Jersey, one vehicle in a fleet of 12 is specially equipped with a ramp to accommodate wheelchair loading on the vehicle. The demonstration vehicles take commuters to and from the Lindenwold line during rush hours and are utilized for local transit during off-peak time.

In the lower Naugatuck Valley in Connecticut, a suburban locale in which 10 percent of the population is aged, UMTA funding will be used in a demonstration to develop transportation services to health and medical facilities. Demonstrations will test demand-responsive and fixed-route services, as well as combinations of the two. A specially equipped dial-a-bus system will be tested and demonstrated.

Helena, Montana, capital of that State and its retirement center, has no bus system. The only transportation available for the aged is by taxicab at high cost. Accordingly, UMTA has provided a demonstration grant for a multi-modal system which will be demand-responsive and designed to fulfill the mobility needs of senior citizens. The operator of the system will be the local taxi company and if the demonstration proves successful the city will continue the operation.

The National Urban League has been awarded a four-phase study grant by the Department. Phase I is a literature search of all efforts dealing with the marketing of transit services and providing information on transit services to the elderly and handicapped. Phase II will be a nationwide demographic identification of the "transportation deprived". In Phase III, the Urban League will conduct a ten-city analysis of transit user and

non-user attitudes. In Phase IV, the result of all of the above will be the development of guidelines of proven and new transit marketing and information techniques.

In St. Petersburg, Florida, UMTA has funded a demonstration planning project which will lead to definitive design of a multi-faceted transportation demonstration project aimed at providing improved mobility for the aged. The project planning area which is comprised of census tracts have as much as 80 percent senior citizens.

In Cranston, Rhode Island, a planning grant has been awarded in order to determine the optimum system, routing and scheduling in order to link five senior citizen public housing units plus an education and training center for mentally retarded children and adults to community social service agencies, medical facilities, employment and recreational activities. When the plans are evolved it is anticipated that the city of Cranston will apply for funding to test these plans.

A demonstration grant has been awarded to Klamath Falls, Oregon, which will test the feasibility of, and develop a model for, the use of school buses for public transportation. The demonstration will serve primarily senior citizen housing complexes.

In fiscal year 1972, UMTA has funded three demonstration projects in Model Cities neighborhoods in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Des Moines, Iowa; and Los Angeles, California. These projects are primarily oriented toward testing the economic feasibility of providing mass transit for inner city circulation. They offer transit services from the model neighborhoods

to medical facilities and social service agencies. These projects directly serve the elderly as a large proportion of the population of inner city residents are over 65.

The Department believes, however, that the solution to this problem does not lie entirely in developing separate facilities for the elderly and handicapped, but in making all transportation facilities available to them. Section 16 of the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 seeks to deal with this problem by requiring that localities give special consideration to actions designed to meet the needs of the elderly and handicapped when planning and designing federally assisted urban mass transportation facilities and equipment. The Department has taken the position that no capital grant or technical study project may be approved under the act until the applicant has demonstrated that this requirement has been complied with. Let me just give you an example of what we are doing in this regard. UMTA has on its staff transportation specialists with responsibility for providing assistance and advice in the development and application of architectural standards relating to facilities for the elderly and handicapped. They assist in reviewing applications for capital grants to assure the adequacy of proposed facilities designed for the elderly and the handicapped. Finally, they advise cities that apply for Federal funds on architectural solutions to design problems that will ensure ready use by the elderly and handicapped.

UMTA is not the only administration within our Department sensitive to this problem, however. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

and the Federal Highway Administration supervise a Pedestrian Safety Program. One of the specific objectives of this program is to define special problems associated with elderly pedestrians. Our statistics indicate that pedestrians account for approximately 18 percent of the Nation's annual traffic deaths (last year 55,000 total deaths). Of the pedestrian deaths, a disproportionate 25 percent is accounted for by older persons over 65. Consequently, the Department has a research program under way to determine the causes of pedestrian fatalities and to develop countermeasures for accident avoidance and injury reduction taking into consideration the characteristics of victims. We are very hopeful that the results of this program will have particular benefit to the elderly.

Another modal administration of the Department that is taking into account the problems of the elderly is the Federal Aviation Administration. They have been considering the portal-to-portal needs of the elderly and the handicapped. These include terminal accommodations as well as those for enplaning, enroute comfort, and deplaning. At many large airports, the level "jet ways" which extend from the terminal to the aircraft have made things a lot easier for the elderly and handicapped traveler.

Since airport terminal buildings are not funded under the Airport Development Program, the FAA is not directly involved in their construction. They do, however, issue guidance material for the use of architects and engineers in the design of terminal buildings. Likewise, in regard to the enplaning, enroute comfort, and deplaning accommodations, they suggest means of making air travel more comfortable for the handicapped and have found

that the industry shares their concern. In this regard, on November 27, 1968, the FAA issued an Advisory Circular entitled "Airport Terminals and the Physically Handicapped". This circular, which deals with suggestions for aiding the elderly and handicapped traveler, has been very well received.

In addition to the foregoing programs, we are also investigating the financial burden of full transit fares on older persons in an effort to determine how this burden may be offset.

As you are aware, recent legislation guarantees that all persons, including the elderly, who are displaced by transportation projects are provided with adequate compensation to pay for their relocation. This expanded authority means the Government will pick up the tab for more of the actual costs of transportation projects, costs which were previously borne by individuals.

On the basis of the best evidence available, the Department of Transportation believes that an accurate estimate of the proportion of expenditures for relocation assistance to elderly persons as a result of highway construction would be in the range of 25 to 30 percent. Our review of studies in Massachusetts, Ohio, Tennessee and Texas supports this estimate. In one relocation study in Chicopee, Massachusetts, nearly 18 percent of the displacees were retirees. In a study of 730 displaced households in Cleveland, Ohio, the median age of the head of household was almost 52 years. In Tennessee, among 102 families displaced almost 39 percent of the adult males and females displaced were 60 or more years of age. In the Texas study the average age of the displaced household head was 60.

When one examines the conduct of relocation advisory services in light of the intense, highly-individualized, direct counseling relationship between the displacee and the relocation specialist, the added value of the process to elderly persons is seen. More so than other age groups, the elderly may require more detailed interpretations of their entitlements, assistance in selecting replacement housing and consultation with respect to mortgage, leasing or rental provisions.

Mr. Chairman, H.R. 12017 and H.R. 13925, the Administration bill which would amend the Older Americans Act, both represent efforts to deal with the problems associated with growing old in this society--to get at the "core" problems facing the elderly in their attempts to live fruitful, wholesome lives. However, though the Department applauds the objectives of both bills, we strongly recommend enactment of H.R. 13925 in lieu of H.R. 12017. We believe H.R. 13925 provides the appropriate method to attain these worthy and necessary objectives. H.R. 12017 would give the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare the authority to develop and implement, at the Federal level, a special impact program which would be specifically designed to meet the specific transportation needs of senior citizens. As I have explained this morning, the Department of Transportation already supports a variety of demonstration programs which are designed to meet the transportation needs of senior citizens. We are concerned that enactment of H.R. 12017 would lead to duplication of efforts and the resultant wasting of vital resources.

On the other hand, the Administration's proposal would strengthen State and Area Planning Agencies and make it possible for them to develop comprehensive solutions to the problems of the elderly. It emphasizes local planning to develop full utilization of existing programs. This Administration believes that Federal funds should be available for use by State and local areas on projects and priorities as determined by those areas. We believe this a far more preferable approach than a fragmented attack on these problems.

At the State and community level the problems of elderly citizens are more visible and perhaps even better understood. State Planning Agencies would be in a much better position to obtain from local communities their particular needs and to allocate resources in a manner that would maximize their usefulness in meeting those more accurately defined needs. There are already in existence within the Federal system numerous programs and funding mechanisms which can be utilized to more adequately meet the specific needs of the elderly. The need now is to create a mechanism to match these existing Federal resources to the real needs of the local community.

We strongly support the interagency coordinating process as provided for in the Administration's bill. We believe it will significantly improve the ability of all levels of government to deliver more effectively a wide range of services to our senior citizens.

As to how we can accomplish coordination Departmental-wise, I can speak for the Department. Secretary Volpe has placed responsibility for

coordinating the Department's transportation activities on behalf of the elderly in my office. I have two professional persons on my staff to implement this program. These persons work with other elements within the Department to promote initiatives in this area. In addition, we have proposed the establishment of a Departmental coordinating committee composed of representatives from the various departmental elements to further coordinate and promote programs for disadvantaged groups such as the elderly and the handicapped.

Those closest to the problems should define the needs, set priorities, and actively participate in their resolution. We think it makes good sense. This same theme is part of the Department's recommendations in its Highway Needs Report recently submitted to the Congress.

Specifically contained in the 1972 Highway Needs Report, Secretary Volpe has recommended to the Congress that a Single Urban Fund be created which would be the sole source of financing federally assisted transportation projects at the local level regardless of mode. Through this program we would expect that significantly more money will be available for meeting the needs of our elderly citizens who are so dependent upon the availability of adequate public transportation. Secretary Volpe has also recommended the establishment of a Rural General Transportation Fund for capital investments outside of our urban areas. This fund will be available for funding highway or mass transit projects and can be used to serve the public transportation needs for our elderly citizens in rural areas. The projected level of authorizations for the single urban fund would be \$1 billion for

for fiscal years 1974, \$1.85 billion for fiscal year 1975, and \$2.25 billion for each of the fiscal years 1976 through 1979. The rural general transportation fund projections are \$200 million each for fiscal years 1974 and 1975, and \$400 million for each of fiscal years 1976 through 1979.

Mr. Chairman, at your request we have endeavored to keep our prepared statement brief. This, therefore, concludes my prepared statement, and I will attempt to answer any questions you may have.

